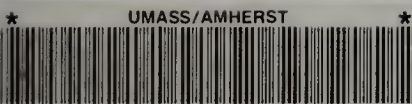


MASS:

CA22.6:

985-

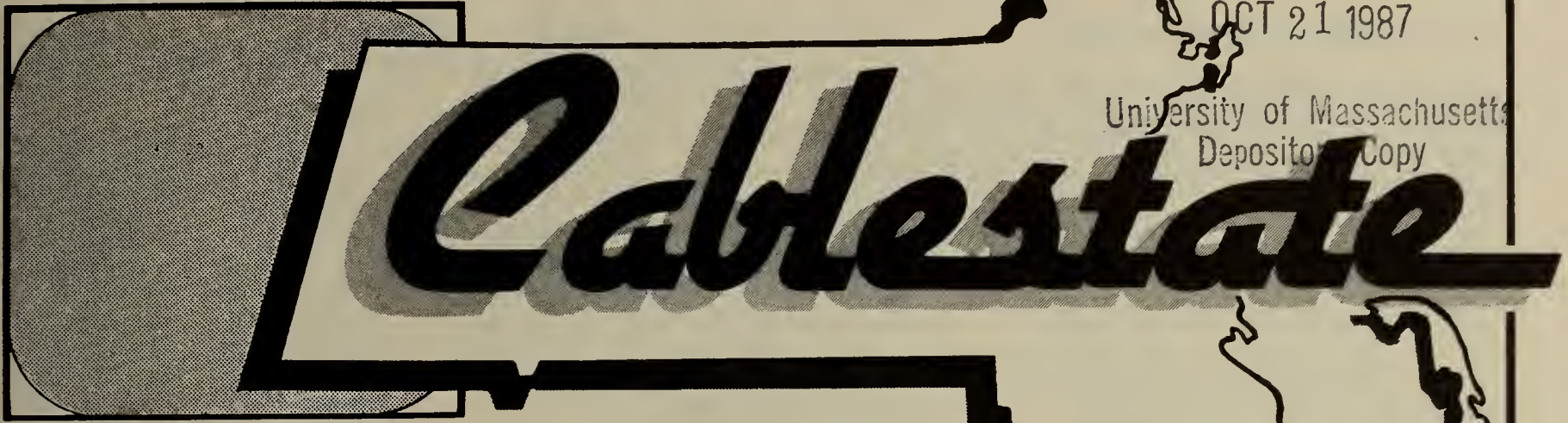
989



312066 0273 7575 0

OCT 21 1987

University of Massachusetts
Depository Copy



A Publication of the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission

Executive Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation

Vol. 4 No. 1

June 1, 1987

Municipal Program Takes Off

By William August

Access to current cable information is a key part of effective municipal cable oversight and planning. Municipal demand for cable information has traditionally been substantial because of the frequent and significant changes in cable law and technology. Responding to this demand, the Massachusetts Cable Commission recently inaugurated a Municipal Assistance Program to share more systematically important legal and technical cable information with the state's 289 cable communities.

The Municipal Assistance Program has undertaken several information sharing initiatives with cities and towns including: an early warning "renewal alert" for renewal communities, development of a Municipal Cable Contacts Directory, dissemination of informational memoranda explaining the FCC's recent deregulation of rates, an extensive program of visits with local officials around the state as well as collaboration with the Massachusetts Municipal Association in cable information sharing. This article provides an overview of informational resources and services

made available to municipal officials through the Commission's Municipal Assistance Program.

Renewal Alert

Because license renewal time is a municipality's major opportunity for renegotiating its cable franchise, the Commission has instituted an early warning and information sharing system for renewal communities. Under this initiative, the Commission systematically contacts renewal communities more than three years prior to license expiration to notify local officials of the upcoming expiration and of the need for thorough preparation for renewal proceedings.

The Commission sends renewal communities packets that include the following essential renewal materials: the federal Cable Act; the legislative history explaining the federal renewal statute; a Commission-prepared overview of renewal; and a flow chart showing a renewal process. Any community not on the Commission's list and interested in this packet, or other renewal materials, should contact the Commission.

Municipal Directory

The Commission recently com-

pleted and released a Municipal Cable Contacts Directory, which includes addresses and phone numbers for cable advisory committee and/or issuing authority cable contacts for over 250 of the state's approximately 289 cable communities. The directory has already proved invaluable to cable committees and issuing authorities seeking to find contacts in neighboring cable communities or in communities known to have common concerns.

The directory information was gathered through a Commission survey disseminated to municipal officials. The survey also gathered data concerning employment of cable staff, advisory committees, consultants, participation in regional cable activity and existence of local cable dispute resolution mechanisms. The survey shows a development of

(Continued on page 4)

INSIDE

Access to	
Premises Law	p. 3
Update on Rate	
Dereg.	p. 4
Marketing Trends	p. 6
Contest	p. 8

Commissioner's Corner

I am especially pleased with this issue of *Cablestate* because, through the cover article, it brings to the attention of cable watchers throughout the state an exciting new program which I expect will dramatically raise the level of discussion about cable television. The Municipal Assistance Program is designed to "get the word out" and make people more knowledgeable about cable issues generally and the Commission's work specifically. Just as important, we expect that the Program will make Commission staff more aware of the concerns of cable subscribers and municipal officials across the state so that we may more effectively serve them. The industry should benefit too, because an informed public is more appreciative of the difficulties encountered by operators as they conduct their business.

Bill August wrote the lead article in his capacity as the first Municipal Assistance Coordinator, and he has avoided self-aggrandizement. But Bill has been doing an excellent job of networking, researching questions, and developing responsive tactics. Bill has been with the Commission for two years, serving as an able counsel prior to assuming the job of Municipal Assistance Coordinator. Please call him with any questions or concerns. I think you will find the Municipal Assistance Program is a great help.

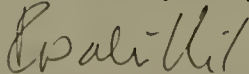
The Commission has also been actively monitoring the impact of rate deregulation in the state. Under the billing and termination regulations, operators are required to give subscribers, issuing authorities and the Commission 30 days notice of rate hikes. Through these notices, the Commission has compiled a list of increases from which some interesting trends can be determined. Some of these trends are discussed in an article on marketing developments which

appears in this issue. And for those of you interested in studying trends for yourselves, the list of rate increases is available to the public for a small fee. In fact, all of the Commission's publications have been listed in this issue, in case any students of cable in Massachusetts are interested. The nominal charges made for these publications reflect the costs associated with reproducing the documents. (See page 5)

Since the last issue of *Cablestate*, the Commission has adjusted some of its positions and welcomed a number of new faces. In addition to Bill's move from counsel to Municipal Assistance Coordinator, Penny Wells has moved from General Counsel to Executive Director. Recently, Holly Salamido has joined the Commission as General Counsel, and Renee Terry and John Patrone have been hired as Legal Counsel. Holly worked for the Massachusetts Attorney General prior to an association with the law firm of Parker, Coulter, Daley & White. Both Renee and John came to the Commission from the Department of Public Welfare. Renee had been practicing for a year prior to joining the Commission. John is a recent graduate of the joint degree program in law and public communications at Boston University. We also have a new administrative secretary, Avril Troope, who is learning quickly about our increasingly automated office. I am quite confident that the high caliber of the staff will have many positive benefits for cable subscribers across the state.

One last reminder! Our Fourth Annual Massachusetts Community Television Contest is getting off the ground. Don't forget to get your entries in. There is an entry form in this issue. We expect that this year's competition will be even better than past years'. Have a good summer.

Yours very truly,


Rosalind A. Niles
Commissioner

Regulatory Affairs

Adjudications

Bridgewater (CATV Docket A-49) — The Commission's decision granting the motion for summary decision of the Town of Bridgewater and denying the motion for summary decision by Campbell CATV Associates was appealed to Plymouth Superior Court by Campbell. This case involved the first licensing process in Bridgewater. An administrative appeal by Campbell of the Town's award of a license in the second licensing process to Massachusetts Cablevision is pending in CATV Docket A-54. This case is set for hearing in July.

Section 22 Cases — As required by the terms of the statute (ch.166A, §22), several property owners have filed administrative actions before the Commission seeking to collect more than one dollar as just compensation for the taking of their property by cable operators seeking to provide service to multiple unit dwelling residents. (See related article).

Mashpee/SMATV Case — The Commission ordered a private cable operator in the New Seabury resort community in Mashpee to cease operation until it obtained a license to operate from the Town. The Commission also filed a Petition for Special Relief with the Federal Communications Commission seeking a ruling that under federal law, the New Seabury provider operates a "cable system" for which it needs a license.

Rulemakings

Billing and Termination of Service — The new regulations became effective on October 24, 1986, and the Commission has been actively monitoring compliance. A bulletin further clarifying several points in the rules was issued in October. Notices of billing practices have been received from most cable operators,
(Continued on page 5)

Cable in Multiple Dwelling Units



by Holly K. Salamido,
General Counsel

In recent months, the Commission has received an increasing number of inquiries relative to the so-called "access-to-premises" law (M.G.L.ch. 166A, §22). This provision of the laws of Massachusetts prohibits anyone "owning, leasing, controlling or managing" a multiple dwelling unit from preventing an operator from installing cable if one or more "tenants or occupants" have requested cable service. As many readers will be aware, the access to premises law underwent substantial revisions in late 1985, following a U.S. District Court ruling that the previous statute failed to meet constitutional standards. The statute now reflects constitutional requirements that a private property owner be "justly compensated" for the physical occupation of his property by cable system equipment.

While ensuring that cable operators are able to provide ser-

vice to all eligible subscribers within their service area, the access-to-premises statute also affords significant protection to the owners of private property. Under the statute, cable operators must agree to indemnify property owners for any damage caused by the installation of cable facilities. In addition, the amended statute now provides a mechanism by which a property owner may make a claim of "just compensation" for the government-authorized occupation of their property by cable equipment. Owners who are unsatisfied with the amount of compensation paid by a cable operator may file an appeal with the Commission, seeking an evidentiary hearing. Reasonable compensation is presumed to be one dollar, however the presumption can be overcome by evidence that the owner "has a specific alternative use for the space occupied by CATV system facilities or equipment, the loss of which shall result in a monetary loss to the owner," or that cable's interference with use or occupancy "causes a decrease in the

resale or rental value" of the real estate. The Commission has received three such appeals from property owners to date, and plans to schedule hearings on the matters quite soon.

The practical operation of the access-to-property statute remains problematic, and the law as amended remains under attack on constitutional grounds. Pending lawsuits in both the Worcester and Middlesex Superior Courts (which may be concluded at the time of this publication) question the adequacy of compensation provided to owners of private property. In addition, the scope of the statute's reference to "multiple dwelling units" is still troublesome to many.

In view of the importance of the access-to-premises law to the continued development of cable in Massachusetts, the Commission will be taking an active role in the statute's effectuation. Regulations are now being drafted that will further define the statute's directive that operators conform to "reasonable condi-

(Continued on page 11)

Update on Federal Rate Deregulation

by Penelope Wells,
Executive Director

Until late 1986, local officials in over seventy Massachusetts communities were empowered to set basic cable rates. These communities were rate deregulated on December 29, 1986, when the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) new rate regulations went into effect.

Congress initiated this round of cable rate deregulation in 1984 by directing the FCC to set standards for the deregulation of cable systems found subject to "effective competition." (47 U.S.C. 543) The FCC thereafter adopted regulations (47 CFR 76.33) which significantly relaxed the criteria in force under the Massachusetts rate regulation, 207 CMR 6.51 *et seq.*

The FCC rule provides that a cable system will be considered to have effective competition (and no rate regulation), whenever three off-the-air (broadcast) TV signals are available in the community of service. Signals will be counted toward the three signal test if they place a "Grade B contour" over any portion of the community, if they are "significantly viewed" within the community, or if they are certain translator station signals serving the community. A signal places a Grade B contour if it meets certain field strength criteria. As mentioned previously, a Grade B signal will count if it merely reaches "any portion" of the community. A signal is significantly viewed if it enjoys 2 or 3% of total viewing hours and if it meets certain complex "net weekly circulation" measures. However, cable operators may count a television signal as significantly viewed if it appears

on a list prepared by the FCC in 1972. At that time, significant viewership was measured on a county-wide basis, leaving unaddressed the possibility of lack of significant viewership in a particular community of service.

The FCC's rate deregulation scheme shifts the burden of proof for regulation: all communities are automatically deregulated unless, using the three signal test, they prove an absence of effective competition. Under the former Massachusetts regulation, a community remained regulated until the cable operator proved eligibility for deregulation.

The FCC may grant a petition for re-regulation where "the franchising authority demonstrates with engineering studies... and other showings that [three] such signals are not in fact available within the community." For example, an engineering study might show that local terrain, such as mountains and valleys, may cause a community not to receive a particular signal which appears on signal coverage maps to be available at an adequate field strength. Likewise, viewership studies may prove that a signal which is significantly viewed in the surrounding county is not actually significantly viewed in the community of service.

The Massachusetts Cable Commission has been working with several communities exploring the possibility of petitioning the FCC for re-regulation based on an apparent nonavailability of three off-air signals within the community. The Commission has contacted engineering firms to obtain cost estimates for engineering surveys. It has also communicated with the two major audience survey houses, Arbitron

and Nielsen, to explore acquisition of viewer diaries used by the FCC in prior cases to determine significant viewership. Finally, the Commission has been in touch with FCC staff and cable attorneys around the country to keep abreast of developments at the agency and federal court levels. The Commission will share the results of its research with any interested community.

Municipal Program

(Continued from page 1)

real significance to municipal governance in Massachusetts: 189, or approximately 75 percent of the responding communities now have cable advisory committees.

On the Road Again

A cornerstone of the Municipal Assistance Program is the creation of a new position at the Commission: the Municipal Assistance Coordinator ("MAC"). A key service provided by the Municipal Assistance Coordinator is availability to visit local officials and cable advisory committees for direct information sharing purposes. And it works. In less than a year, the Municipal Assistance Coordinator has traveled to meet with representatives of over thirty cable communities.

The Commission's site visits increase local participation in cable meetings and media coverage of cable activities. The visits also offer local officials the opportunity to ask diverse questions of Commission staff and to build long-term relations with the Commission. The Municipal Assistance Coordinator extends to interested municipalities a standing invitation to contact the Commission about setting up information sharing meetings.

Other Initiatives

In its municipal outreach efforts, the Commission recently helped plan, and was the major

(Continued on next page)

Municipal Program

(Continued from page 4)

participant in an extremely successful and well-attended cable conference sponsored by the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA). In view of the strong positive response to the MMA conference, the Commission has scheduled a September 18, 1987 cable conference which will focus on cable technology and technical issues, to be held at the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston. Further information on the conference will be forthcoming. The Commission is also currently working with the MMA to add, for the first time, a chapter on cable to the MMA guidebook for selectmen.

Another municipal assistance priority this past year was to contact systematically all rate regulated communities prior to the implementation of federal rate deregulation (see *Rate Update*, inside) and to provide comprehensive information on how federal rate deregulation works. Many communities reported that the Commission's memorandum on rate deregulation was their major source of information on this important issue. The Commission has continued to provide technical assistance to those few communities that may be eligible for re-regulation under the new federal rate framework.

The Commission has long served as an informational resource for local and industry officials alike and hopes that its development of a municipal assistance program will make the Commission even more accessible to the cable community for information sharing activity.



Regulatory Affairs

(Continued from page 2)

and rate hike notices have been given to subscribers, issuing authorities and the Commission 30 days prior to the increases. The Commission has received five requests for waivers of the two month limit on advance billing for seasonal customers.

Renewal — The Commission held hearings on its proposed renewal regulations. Further action has been temporarily delayed while the Commission studies the comments submitted and collects information on local and national experiences with the federal statute.

Communities

Belmont — The Commission agreed to review the licensing process in Belmont, which has been unique because of special legislation passed to facilitate the Town's exploration of municipal ownership. As a result of its review, the Town is reissuing its issuing authority report and reopening the process. The Commission granted waivers permitting an abbreviated licensing timeframe.

Massachusetts Cable Commission Publications

1986 Annual Report

The Commission's Annual Report for FY 1986, reporting major activities over the past year and subscriber counts. Free.

Directories of Massachusetts Cable Operators

Systems List: Includes 1987 listing of all towns and operators, addresses and phone numbers of local operators and parent corporations and recent subscriber counts. \$4.00.

Operators and their Towns: Includes list of all cable operators in Massachusetts and municipalities served by each. \$2.00.

Directory of Municipal Cable Contacts

Addresses and phone numbers for over 150 cable advisory committee contacts and more than 250 issuing authority cable contacts. \$4.00.

Massachusetts Cable Statute (M.G.L. Chapter 166A) and **Massachusetts Cable Regulations** (full set). \$3.00.

Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 (47 U.S.C. 521 *et seq.*). \$2.00.

New Consumer Protection Regulations

The Commission's recently promulgated Billing & Termination of Service regulations contain rules affecting several key areas of cable service: late payment, due dates, disconnection, advance billing, form of bill and complaint resolution timetables. Free.

License Renewal Packet

Contains federal renewal statute, legislative history, Commission overview of renewal process and flow chart of a renewal process. \$2.00.

Rates Update

The Commission has compiled a list of all rate increases implemented since federal deregulation took effect in December 1986 and updates this list monthly. Includes old and new rates. \$2.00.

The above fees cover partial cost for reproduction. The Commission encourages public access to its documents. Copies of any documents not included on this list may be made at 20 cents per page.



The "Top Guns" of Cable

Changes in Marketing Strategies in '87

by John Patrone
Legal Counsel



In the old days — say 1982 or 1983 — blockbuster movie packages were what attracted subscribers to cable television. Now, however, just a few years and many millions of VCR sales later, cable operators have begun to see that pay services are no longer the main draw for the consumer buying cable television.

Indeed, a recent movie provides an understanding. While "Top Gun" was one of the highest grossing films in 1986, it has already made its video store debut, to the great anticipation of VCR owners. The pay services, however, are well down the line of those with rights to air the movie.

The pattern that has emerged leaves pay channels behind both video stores and pay-per-views in the race for "windows" to show theatrical releases. With their most profitable service at risk, cable companies have realized they must alter their marketing strategies in order to remain competitive in the video marketplace.

For years, the industry had focused almost exclusively on pay services as both the profit center and the ultimate marketing tool. Pay services had big names and high prices, thereby attracting subscribers and raising company profit by overpricing a sought-after service. But this

has begun to change. For example, a survey of recent rate increases by the Cable Commission indicates that many operators have begun to lower significantly the cost of premium services such as HBO or Disney. (See publication list page 5.)

Even with reductions in price, industry analysts believe that it is unlikely that all of the current pay services will survive in such an environment. They predict that more than one pay channel is likely to be terminated simply because there are too many of them in the marketplace.

Why are premium channels on the wane? Perhaps the most obvious reason is the competition. The advent of technology that has made cable television more attractive and easier to construct and upgrade also gives the subscriber more choices in the ever-expanding video marketplace. Television viewership has increased dramatically in the last 10 years, indicating that the more choices people are given for television viewing, the more they watch. But most importantly, the industry has discovered that in the age of the VCR, what NCTA Chairman Ed Allen says is true: "[T]he public has grown accustomed to controlling its own viewing." If cable does not satisfy the expectations of its subscribers, the subscribers will choose to take their business

elsewhere.

In order to better serve the subscriber now used to such an eclectic video diet, programming and marketing have joined together to rearrange the structure of cable television services. Arranging programming in "tiers" of services has given way to "packages" of services. Subscribers are now being sold, for example, on the idea of buying a sports package or a movie package, instead of a broad range of (often) duplicative program options.

The strongest trend now, however, is toward the Return of Basics to the industry. More than ever before, the premium pay services are taking a back seat to the advertiser-supported, satellite-delivered services received on basic. Services such as ESPN, CNN and A&E have become crucial parts of basic service. "The biggest percentage increases in viewing were posted by the basic satellite cable services, which doubled in viewership from a 4 share to an 8 share from 1982 to 1986 in all television households...[while] pay services remained flat at a 5 share." (*Cablevision*, 03/30/87)

Thus, more and more operators are paying more and more attention to what channel combinations are presented on basic. As Jim Mooney, President of the NCTA said last year, "Programming is what we're selling and it is programming that defines our subscribers' expectations of us."

Why the change? As with any industry, the securing of profits plays a crucial role. Cable operators have realized that they can be profitable by selling basic channels to subscribers.

Now that cable systems in most population centers have been built, companies do not have the luxury of new pockets of previously unserved subscribers waiting for cable service. Operators are going back to the

(Continued on next page)

Top Guns

(Continued from page 6)

franchises they now hold and attempting to increase the subscriber base.

The goal in the industry therefore is to raise the basic penetration rate. A recent survey indicates that penetration has reached nearly 50% of U.S. television households, a significant gain over recent years but still not high enough, according to many industry leaders.

At the same time the industry has begun to settle in with its subscriber base, it has also gained a measure of marketplace freedom. Deregulation of the industry, for better or for worse, has enabled cable to face the subscriber head on. As many operators and municipal authorities have learned since the end of 1986, complete rate deregulation under the Cable Act and consequent rate increases have led to disgruntled subscribers.

Faced with some consumer dissatisfaction, the cable operators have had to temper their rate freedom with a combination of political savvy and attention to practical long-term subscriber harmony. Operators have learned that while consumers are getting more used to the idea of paying for what has always been available to them for "free," they remain skeptical about what cable can offer them. More than ever before, subscribers remain sensitive about price.

According to NYT Cable President David MacDonald, "[t]he people who are not buying cable are price sensitive. There's a group out there that won't take cable even if you offered it to them for free, but by and large price is what's turning most of the holdouts away." (*Multichannel News*, 05/12/86)

While the prices on some premium services have gone down, the Commission's recent survey shows that many companies in Massachusetts have raised their rates in the last few

months, especially on basic channels. Of the 261 operational systems in the state, 115 raised rates in the first four months of 1987. Systems such as the one run by Cablevision of Boston have even eliminated basic rates for new customers, substituting basic services with larger, more expensive packages of channels.

The key for the cable operator is thus to convince the subscriber that these additional services are not only necessary, but worth paying more for as well. The stability and health of the industry would seem to depend on the success of this strategy.

Whatever the eventual long term effects of these changes, cable operators now know that the overall quality of the programming services they provide is the key to consumer satisfaction. CNN, ESPN and A&E have become the new "Top Guns" of cable.

Consumer Corner

(Continued from page 12)

Q. How long do I have to pay my bill before I am disconnected?

A. You must pay your bill within 30 days of the due date indicated on your bill. After 30 days, your account will become delinquent. Your cable company must give you a written notice that your account is delinquent in a clear and conspicuous manner. In addition, the cable company must give you at least 8 business days from the mailing of the notice to pay your bill. After 8 business days, the cable company can disconnect your service. These are minimum requirements established by the Commission. You should check your Billing Practices Notice to find your company's actual policy.

Q. My cable company has almost doubled my cable rates. This does not seem fair. What authority does the Commission have regarding cable rates?

A. Formerly, the Commission conducted hearings to determine if a cable company could raise its rates. While rates in some Massachusetts communities have been deregulated since 1981, according to recent federal law, the Commission may not regulate rates in any city or town. As a result, cable companies can increase rates without hearings. The Commission requires cable companies to provide subscribers 30 days notice before rates are increased.

Q. My house was burglarized and the converter box was among the property stolen. I promptly reported the theft to the cable company but I am being charged the full price of my converter. Do I have to pay for the converter?

A. Yes. You are financially responsible for stolen converters if this is a billing practice of your cable company. You should check the notice of billing practices provided by your cable company.

Q. I receive Basic service as well as two movie channels. Since my cable bill is too expensive, I want to discontinue the movie channels. When will my bill reflect the lower level of service?

A. The answer to your question depends on your cable company's billing practices. Your cable company should have given you this information in a notice detailing billing practices. If you do not have this information, contact your cable company.

Q. My cable company no longer offers a service option of only broadcast channels and local programming. These are the only channels I watch and I am on a limited fixed income. May the cable company do this?

A. Yes. A federal law, the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, allows cable companies to restructure service tiers however they wish. Cable companies, however, must notify customers 30 days before services are retired.

1986: The Third Annual Massachusetts Community Television Contest *Winners*

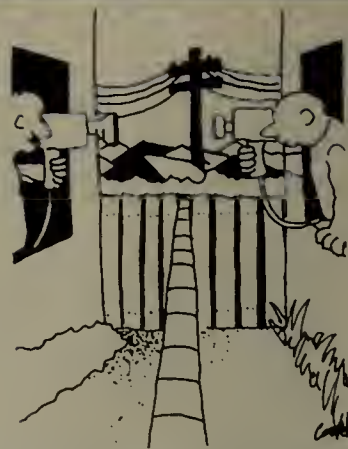
by Kimberly Kyle,
Program Manager

A combination of hope and confidence brought over 200 attendees to the Third Annual Massachusetts Community Television Contest Awards Ceremony. The event was sponsored by the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission and held in Gardner Auditorium, with a reception following in Nurses Hall, located in the State House. Commissioner Rosalind A. Niles presided over the ceremony, and Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation Secretary Paula W. Gold, announced winners in several categories.

Commissioner Niles welcomed the audience and began the ceremony by giving special recognition to the ten judging

sites involved in judging the 225 entries to the contest. Commissioner Niles explained to the audience the vital and difficult role the judges play in the contest by narrowing down the entries in their categories to three nominees. Following the introduction, winners were announced in each category. Excerpts were shown from the winning programs, and inscribed plaques were presented to the winners.

The 1986 ceremony honored several producers who had been recognized in previous contests and many more winning for the first time. Of the 225 programs submitted, 60 were produced by Massachusetts cable television system operators and 165 were produced by Massachusetts community volunteers, access organizations, non-profit



organizations and schools.

Commissioner Niles concluded the ceremony by congratulating all the participants and thanking the producers for sharing their creative work with the Commission, judges and their peers. She also pointed out to the audience that many of the nominees who did not win last year improved their art, and came back to win in the 1986 contest. Commissioner Niles stressed that the Commission is committed to community programming and encouraged all community producers to participate in the Fourth Annual Community Television Contest. (See this issue of CABLESTATE for details. Please note changes in the categories of entrants, rules and entry form.)

Winners

DOCUMENTARY

Cable Operator

Jane Morley Schneider
VJ DAY REMEMBERED
Continental, Needham

SHORT DOCUMENTARY

Cable Operator

M.L. Baron
HURRICANE
Fairhaven-Acushnet
Cablevision

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Cable Operator

Mike McKinney, Doug
Frauenholz, Marla Ettenberg
RUDOLF
Greater Media, Northbridge

LOCAL NEWS

Cable Operator

Beth Hiron
CAPE II ALIVE
Cape Cod Cablevision

ENTERTAINMENT/VARIETY

Cable Operator

Ward P. McCarthy
THE 14TH ANNUAL
MONTGOMERY AND
WARD AWARDS
Continental, Springfield

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Cable Operator

Gregg Graff, Ann Leightheiser
6:30 SUNDAY - TEEN SUICIDE
Continental of Western MA

LOCAL ELECTION COVERAGE

Cable Operator

Cheryl Imbriglio, Dave Lynn,
Anthony Benis
ELECTION WATCH '86
Cablevision of Brookline

SPORTS

Cable Operator

Rollins Cablevision of S.E. MA
1985 RACE OF CHAMPIONS
Rollins, Swansea, Somerset

EDUCATIONAL/ INSTRUCTIONAL

Cable Operator

Leonard Aaron Caplan
A GEOLOGICAL FIELD TRIP
Warner Cable, Swampscott

Winners (Continued)

PERFORMING ARTS

Cable Operator

Steven Kostant
GLASS HARMONICA
Greater Boston Cable, Woburn

DOCUMENTARY

Access

Matthew Scott
LAND OF PLENTY
Lowell Cable

SHORT DOCUMENTARY

Access

Rene Kochman, Dave O'Leary
GRAY KNOB
Lowell Cable

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Access

Vincent Ialenti
NEW TRADITIONAL STUDENT
Adams Russell Cable, Gardner

LOCAL NEWS

Access

Boston C.A. and Programming
Foundation
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK
NEWS
Cablevision of Boston

ENTERTAINMENT/ VARIETY

Access

Michele Furst, NEF for the Arts
MIXED SIGNALS, PROGRAM II
Cablevision of Boston, Warner
Cable, American Cablesystems

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Access

East Boston Neighborhood
Health Center
HEALTH LINE EAST #24
Cablevision of Boston

LOCAL ELECTION COVERAGE

Access

George Wood, Irwin Hipsman
ELECTION WATCH '85
Warner Cable, Somerville

SPORTS

Access

Andy Katz, Jay Adams
THE 1986 BAY STATE GAMES
Continental, Newton

EDUCATIONAL/INSTRUCTIONAL

Access

Jerry Rigby
CHELMSFORD HIGH SCHOOL
OVERVIEW
Lowell Cable

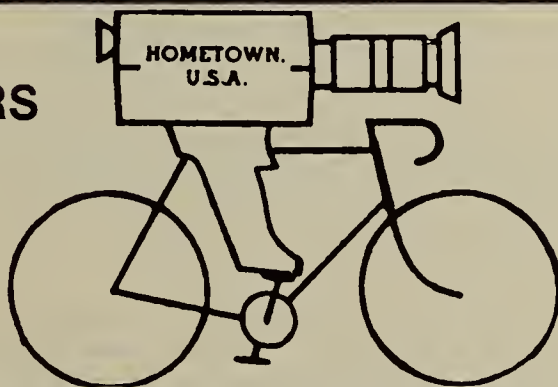
PERFORMING ARTS

Access

David Margolis
BAROQUE VIOLIN WITH
DANIEL STEPNER
Cablevision of Brookline

MASSACHUSETTS HOMETOWN USA WINNERS 1986

The Hometown USA Video Festival, sponsored by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, is the only national video festival that judges the works of public, educational, governmental access programs and local origination programs.



Overall Excellence in L.O.:

Cablevision of Brookline
EXCELLENCE IN L.O.
Brookline, MA

Documentary Public Awareness:

Media Professional
Michael Cabana
I WON'T BE BACK
Springfield, MA

Entertainment:

Community Producer-Single
Scott Haller
TOO DARN HOT
Brighton, MA

Innovative Uses of Cable:

Media Professional-Single
Eric Bicker-Nicks
VIDEO SHORTS
Norwood, MA

L.O. Program Promotion:

Sal Martino and W. McCarthy
WHERE'S THE BINGO?
Springfield, MA

Magazine Format:

Community Producer
Victoria Hall and D. Richardson
WE ARE THE CITY
Jamaica Plain, MA

Programming for Youth:

Media Professional-Single
Hubert Jessup
THE DRUG DILEMMA
Boston, MA

Community Producer-Single:

Marc Dewalle
CHS: AN INTRODUCTION
Chelmsford, MA

NOMINEES FOR MASSACHUSETTS SYSTEM ACE AWARDS, 1987

The ACE awards are sponsored by the National Cable Television Association, and are announced at the annual NCTA conference.



Overall Commitment to Local Programming Below 30,000 Subscribers:

Cablevision of Brookline
Anthony Benis, Program
Manager
Brookline, MA

Single Program - Talk Show:

Cape Cod Cablevision
Michelle Haynes
THE MICHELLE HAYNES
SHOW
South Yarmouth, MA

The Fourth Annual Massachusetts Community Television Contest — 1987

The Massachusetts Community Television Contest is designed to recognize the work of the community based video producers and to encourage the use of local cable television channels.

Categories and Awards

Two first place awards will be given to winning entrants in the categories identified below:

Documentary	Public Affairs
Short Documentary (15 minutes or less)	Educational/Instructional
Public Service Announcement	Sports
Local News	Music
Entertainment/Variety	Performing Arts/Stage

Entrants

Entrants must identify themselves within one of the following two groups of producers:

Media professionals, including access/L.O. staff, media educators, independent producers and others who are paid to produce programming.

Community volunteers, including those who do not earn money for program production.

Judging

Entries will be judged by panels of video producers, cable TV programmers, and cable TV subscribers on the basis of 1) creativity; 2) direction; 3) effectiveness; 4) production values (attention paid to audio, lighting, continuity); and 5) originality.

Rules

1. Entries may be produced in any format but must be submitted on $\frac{3}{4}$ " cassettes. DO NOT SEND MASTERS.
2. Entries must be received by September 11, 1987 at 5 p.m. and accompanied by an entry form.
3. Entries are free, but limited to two from each participating individual or organization. Each must be on a separate cassette accompanied by a separate entry form.
4. Entries longer than 1 hour in length will not be considered.
5. Entries must have been first publicly shown on a Massachusetts local origination or access channel.
6. Entries must have been cablecast in Massachusetts between August 23, 1986 and September 10, 1987. They must be produced by Massachusetts residents or Massachusetts-based organizations.
7. Entries must be submitted as individual programs only. No component edits should be submitted.
8. The judges reserve the right to re-categorize entries or not to make awards in a category.
9. All decisions by the judges are final.
10. All interpretation of contest rules will be made by the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission.
11. Awards will be trophies, plaques or certificates and will not be monetary in nature.

MAEM Video Contest

In conjunction with the Massachusetts Association of Educational Media, the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission will give first place awards to students in grades 9-12 who have participated in MAEM's School Library Media Month Video Contest. Students will be honored in two special categories: News and Entertainment. Any high school student or group not participating in the MAEM contest may compete in the Massachusetts Community Television Contest.

Announcements of Winners

Nominees for the awards will be notified by mail. The winners will be announced at an Awards Ceremony to be scheduled in the fall, 1987. Further information on the ceremony will be forthcoming.

COMING SOON!
Commission sponsored
TECHNICAL SEMINAR
September 18, 1987
Transportation Bldg. — 10 Park Plaza, Boston
Call Bill August (727-6925)



Ace Awards

(Continued from page 9)

Program Series - News:

Greater Fall River Cable TV,
Inc.

Jim Phillips

LOCAL CABLE NEWS

Fall River, MA

Program Series - Sports

Events Coverage:

Continental Cablevision of
Springfield

Bob Thomas

VOLVO INTERNATIONAL

TENNIS TOURNAMENT

Springfield, MA

Single Program - About Sports:

Continental Cablevision of
Needham

Charles G. Wright & David F.
Walzer

THANKSGIVING CLASSIC

PREGAME SHOW

Needham, MA

Single Program - Music:

Greater Boston Cable

Steven Kostant & Stefan

Koukias

VOICE OF THE VIOLIN

Woburn, MA

Program Series - About Sports:

Greater Boston Cable

Helmick, M. Kathryn Villare
& Gill

LOCAL CABLE SPORTS

Woburn, MA

Program Series - Music:

Continental Cablevision

Mary G. Rabinow

BACK STAGE PASS

Marblehead, MA

Single Program - Informational:

Cablevision of Canton

George T. Comeau

VIADUCT

Canton, MA

Program Series - Children's Programming:

Continental Cablevision of
Springfield

Springfield Symphony Or-
chestra, WGBY-TV

MUSIC & ME

Springfield, MA

Single Program - Comedy/ Variety:

Continental Cablevision of
Springfield

Ward P. McCarthy

AFTER THE FACT

Springfield, MA

Promotional Programming -

Public Service Announcements Campaign:

Lowell Cable Television, Inc.

Ruth Page & Jim Gaffney

BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER

CAMPAIGN

Lowell, MA

Multiple Dwelling Units

(Continued from page 3)

tions" of the owner in installing cable facilities. The Commission urges cable operators and property owners to work together to find compromises that are mutually acceptable. Reasonable efforts and accommodations on the part of both owners and operators are necessary if the access-to-premises statute is to continue to insure the receipt of cable services to all community residents.



ENTRY BLANK

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Mail to: Massachusetts Cable TV Commission
Community Television Contest
100 Cambridge Street, Room 2003
Boston, MA 02202

_____ Media Professional
_____ Community Volunteer

Category _____

Name of Program _____ Running Time _____

Cablecast Date _____ System _____

Signature _____

Signature gives the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission the right to retain a copy of the program for public viewing in its library and other exhibitions on a non-exclusive basis. Signature means the producer has the authority to submit videotapes.

Consumer Corner

by Renee Terry, Legal Counsel

It has been more than seven months since the Commission's new Billing and Termination of Service Regulations went into effect. The Commission is pleased to report that overall, the new regulations have been quite successful. Cable operators have instituted uniform billing and termination of service practices and cable subscribers have received information regarding their consumer rights.

The Commission receives many telephone inquiries from cable subscribers who have questions about their cable service. The Commission has a full time consumer investigator who handles consumer complaints. Initially, all cable subscribers are urged to contact their cable company in order to resolve the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved, then cable subscribers are directed to their local Cable Advisory Board, if one exists, in order to resolve the complaint. Otherwise, the consumer investigator makes every effort to resolve the subscriber's complaint. Ultimately, under the new regulations, subscribers and cable companies may petition the Commission to resolve a consumer complaint about billing.

The following questions are examples of those frequently asked of the Commission:

Q. I have just received my cable bill. It is the beginning of the month and I am being charged for the entire month. May my cable company bill me for service that I have not even received yet?

A. Yes. Cable is considered to be like an entertainment service for which people pay in advance. Just as customers must pay for movie tickets before viewing a film, cable operators can require subscribers to pay for services before receiving them. The new billing and termination of service regulations permit cable companies to bill cable customers, at the most, two months in advance of receiving services.

Q. I recently moved to my summer home and I only want cable for four months. The local cable company told me that I have to pay my entire cable bill before I can receive service. Do I have to pay my entire bill as the cable company told me?

A. Yes, but only if your cable company obtained a waiver from the Commission to bill seasonal residents in your community four months in advance. These waivers are granted only upon a showing by the company that the costs involved in servicing seasonal accounts justify the expanded advance billing. You may find out if the cable operator in your community has received such a waiver by contacting either the Commission or your operator.

Q. What information should my cable bill contain?

A. Your bill should contain the following information:

- the name and address of the cable company;
- the period of time covered by each chargeable service;
- the dates on which individually chargeable services were rendered;
- itemizations for pay-per-view events should include some combination of the dates viewed, number of events viewed and per event charge, and/or titles received;
- each rate or charge levied;
- the amount of the bill for the current billing period separate from any balance due; and
- any applicable credits and dates on which they were applied.

Q. I think that the cable company billed me for a service that I did not receive. If I do not pay the bill, can the cable company terminate my service?

A. Yes, if you do not pay any of the bill. You are only entitled to withhold the disputed portion of the bill. Your first action should be to notify your cable company that you think that an error has been made on your bill and remit the nondisputed portion of your bill.

(Continued on page 7)

Massachusetts Cable Television Commission

100 Cambridge Street, Room 2003
Boston, Massachusetts 02202

Michael S. Dukakis
Governor

Paula W. Gold
Secretary of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation

Rosalind A. Niles
Commissioner

Penelope Wells
Executive Director/Editor, *Cablestate*

